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C O N F I D E N T I A L RIGA 000653

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TAGS: MOPS MARR PREL UN LE LG

SUBJECT: LEBANON/LATVIA/UNIFIL: POLITICALLY TOUGH, VERY  
MODEST AT BEST

REF: STATE 134133

Classified By: CDA Phillip L. Antweiler. Reason: 1.4 (D)

¶1. (C) Pol/econ chief and DATT delivered reftel points to Kaspars Ozolins, MFA A/S equivalent for security policy, and Signe Jansone, MFA A/S equivalent for the Middle East, on August 16. Ozolins, while noting Latvia's support for UNSCR 1701, stressed that Latvia's military forces are currently thinly stretched between deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo, and those in Latvia are preparing for the security requirements associated with the NATO Summit in November. He also noted that Latvia has never participated in a UN PKO and has heard nothing from DPKO about what would be needed. He also pointed out that MOD Slaksteris gave a radio interview August 15 in which he said that he did not foresee the deployment of Latvian troops to Lebanon.

¶2. (C) Pol/econ chief also spoke to Petris Ustubs, the PM's Foreign Policy Advisor, who stressed that while Slaksteris was not articulating a specific GOL decision not to deploy troops, any such action would require a decision by the cabinet and approval by the Parliament. Ustubs cautioned that in the run up to parliamentary elections October 7, the possibility to use Lebanon to play politics on Iraq might appeal to some political factions in Latvia.

¶3. (C) DATT also spoke with CHOD BG Maklakovs, who said he had no political guidance, but would examine whether it would be militarily possible to send one or two individuals to UNIFIL without negatively impacting current operations and summit security.

¶4. (C) Comment: Latvia will be a very hard sell and we caution against pushing too hard. The simple fact is that they do not have the available military forces to make a significant contribution to UNIFIL. At best they could send one or two individuals as a political show of support, but we need to carefully consider the cost. Latvia has never participated in a UN-led mission (only NATO missions or U.S.-led coalitions) and a parliamentary decision so close to elections provides opportunities for mischief making and may result in unintended consequences. If such a very modest contribution remains desirable, we recommend a direct approach by UN/DPKO to the GOL.

Antweiler